

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2015
11:00AM IN ROOM 13 (OLD SCR)

Present

Mr David Babb (Chair)
Mr Stephen Lawrence
AVM Gavin Mackay
Rev. Canon Professor Peter Neil
Professor Mark Thompson

In attendance

Dr Anne K Craven, Registrar and Secretary
Professor Jayne Mitchell, Deputy Vice Chancellor
Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Mr Fred Robson, Head of Estates
Mr Barrie Shipley, Head of Finance
Ms Alison Smith, Head of Human Resources
Ms Abi Rogers, SU Manager (for item 8 only)
Ms Becca Smith, SU President (for item 8 only)
Mrs Natalie Pickles, Governance Officer & PA to University Council

1.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting

2.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Kevin Brown.

3.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 June 2015

The minutes of the last meeting held on 9 June 2015 were APPROVED as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

Action

5. Membership and Terms of Reference

Members RECEIVED and APPROVED the Terms of Reference.

6. Matters arising

(i) Action points

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the progress against the action points from the last meeting:

Item 6(i) Budget/Financial Forecasts

The Director of Resources provided an update on student numbers and reported that recruitment was far in excess of the budgeted number resulting in a £1.5m increase in fee income.

The Academic Registrar tabled papers showing the latest recruitment figures, clearing statistics and the School of Teacher Development Applications Comparison. The combined degree total enrolled was 673 with a further provisional 103, total projected target was 776.

Committee members NOTED that these were encouraging figures.

PN reported that the University had received about 570 PGCE applications and they had been rejected for various reasons. However, the rules would be changing the following year and there would be an open market across the country. BGU would need to be encouraging people to apply early as there was a risk that NCTL could close applications once target numbers were reached.

DB asked about joint degrees and their viability for the future with such small numbers. It was noted that the Portfolio Management Group have this on their radar and this year will have a complete review over-all of the combined degrees framework.

(ii) Any other matters

There were no other matters to discuss.

7 Finance

(i) Draft Annual Monitoring Statement

The Registrar & Secretary presented the draft Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS) showing the data in it that had been completed so far. FE&GP Committee RECEIVED and APPROVED the AMS in principle and authorised a more systematic collection of the data.

It was AGREED that AKC would create a form to circulate to Council members for their completion, which would capture the Equality and Diversity information required for this Return. This would be issued with the next Council meeting Agenda, asking that they be brought back for the 20th November meeting.

AKC

(ii) Draft Annual Assurance Return

AKC presented the draft Annual Assurance Return. It was noted that BGU was able to show compliance with the Concordat to support research integrity because of the Research Ethics Policy that was in place.

FE&GP Committee APPROVED the Draft Annual Assurance Return.

(iii) HEFCE Accounts Direction annual letter

Committee members NOTED the HEFCE Accounts Direction annual letter which sets out the compliance requirements for 2015/16 reporting.

(iv) Reimbursement of Expenses Policy

BS/AKC

BS informed members that there had been a few minor updates to the above policy.

Members AGREED the following changes should be made:

- Point 2.10: Vice Chancellors expense claims should be approved by the Chair of Audit Committee (not the Director of Resources). This would show better accountability.
- A sentence/paragraph should be included regarding governor expenses.
- Clarification was required on the use of any air miles accrued by staff on official business.

The Committee RECEIVED and APPROVED the updated Expenses Policy, subject to the amendments noted above.

(v) Gifts and Hospitality Policy

BS/SD

BS reported only minor amendments to the above policy. The following changes were agreed

- Point 10, third bullet point would be an appropriate place to capture more detail regarding 'air miles' (discussed above)
- It would be good practice to keep a 'log' of those gifts that are declined as well as those that have been received and handed in.
- Point 11, first bullet point should include "or declined" as well as another bullet detailing "Method of Disposal".

Subject to the above amendments, the Committee RECEIVED and APPROVED the updated Gifts and Hospitality Policy

The SU Manager presented the first edition of the SU Accounts. AR confirmed that grants from the Foundation Fund meant that they were not in a loss- making situation this year. Total funds at 31 July 2015 stood at £83,995.

The Committee NOTED that it had been a positive year, particularly in the light of the change in status and congratulated the President and Manager on their efforts in managing the business well.

Employment

(i) HR Staffing report

The Head of Human Resources presented the Staffing Report and the following points were noted:

- The percentage of casual and fixed term staff included invigilators and external examiners and in reality was around 5-6%.
- Percentage of all permanent staff turnover was not yet a cause for concern but it should not increase any further
- Percentage of staff over 50 years of age was higher than the sector average and this would be taken into account in BGU's succession planning
- Visiting tutor numbers were high. BGU's workforce plan will be to reduce this.

(ii) Salary benchmarking

The Head of Human Resources presented the above report which was discussed by the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There was no data for level J because there were no variants to comment on. The fact that all academic staff were in that one band (J) was an issue in itself and linked back to the high percentage of staff that were over 50 years of age.
- BGU support staff salaries are in the lower quartile across the board. Members of the Committee expressed concern that this was the case and were grateful to AS for participating in the salary benchmarking exercise.
- New jobs are being evaluated at a higher level than current staff enjoy. There is a legacy of Job Descriptions that do not reflect the role accurately as the institution has grown.
- Currently, there is not an established promotions system but the intention is to provide a clear career progression trajectory for all academic staff.

- There is a system that exists to use 'contribution' points for staff who are performing well but it has not been widely and systematically utilised in the past. There is also the opportunity to award incremental pay increases within an existing pay framework. Many staff are at the top of their scales already and there is work required to tackle the more fundamental issue of lower pay.

The Committee AGREED that a project working group should be set up to look at the "total workforce planning and total reward & recognition package" offered by the University. This would deal with academic and support staff career transition and progression and include topics such as succession planning and appraisal monitoring linked to reward & recognition.

AS

It was AGREED that in the first instance, AS would put together a realistic timetable of action to take to University Council on 20th November.

AS

The Committee APPROVED the use of an external resources / rewards specialist to assist the project working group.

The Chair of FE&GP thanked AS for her work on this.

(iii) Workforce Plan

It was NOTED that this item had been covered above.

10.

Estates

(i) Building works update

The Committee RECEIVED the building works update presented by the Head of Estates for information NOTING that projects were running on time.

(ii) Health and Safety Annual Report

The Committee RECEIVED and NOTED the Health and Safety annual report.

11.

Agenda suggestions

- Academic staff career progression and reward for February Meeting (to include context in comparison of the living wage).
- The Director of Resources would present the accounts for the current year in the new FRS102 format.

NP/AS

SD

12. Any other Business

SD informed members that BGU had recently changed its life assurance provider, which was now Zurich. Zurich were far more competitive than the previous provider. SD informed members that Death in Service schemes were required to be registered with HMRC as a pension scheme. SD has registered the scheme and also a new Trust Document has been produced and reviewed by the University solicitors. This is signed by the VC and SD on behalf of the University as the administering trustee. In addition to this a separate bank account is required for the scheme and SD will progress this with the University bankers (NatWest) with the VC, SD and Head of Finance acting as signatures for the account.

13. Key items for University Council

- Timetable for Workforce Planning and Reward & Recognition Package Project Working Group **AS**

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Finance, Employment & General Purposes Committee will take place on Wednesday 24 February at 2.00pm in Room 102.

Signed 

Date 24/2/16